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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: U.S. PRESIDENT OBAMA'S CHINA VISIT

¶1. Summary: Taiwan's major Chinese-language and English-language papers gave significant straightforward and editorial coverage November 18 to a joint statement released by U.S. President Barack Obama and his Chinese counterpart Hu Jintao Tuesday. News coverage also focused on developments in cross-Straits relations and the year-end city mayors and county magistrates' elections around the island. The KMT-leaning "China Times" ran a front page banner headline reading "Obama Reiterates the Taiwan Relations Act; the United States Urges Both Sides [of the Taiwan Strait] to Actively Engage in Dialogue." The pro-unification "United Daily News" also ran a news story on its front page with the headline: "Obama-Hu Joint Statement: the United States Supports Political Dialogue and Peaceful Development across the Taiwan Strait."

¶2. In terms of editorials and commentaries, an editorial in the pro-independence "Liberty Times" discussed Obama's remarks on the Taiwan Relations Act (TRA) and said it showed that the TRA is of equal importance as that of the three U.S.-China communiqués. An editorial and a column in the mass-circulation "Apple Daily" criticized Obama's trip to Asia and said all one saw was that Obama was trying to create a good impression with China, and one does not see any new U.S. foreign policy. A "United Daily News" editorial discussed the core values of Obama's visit to China, while a separate column questioned if Washington and Beijing have made any quid pro quo when urging both sides of the Taiwan Strait to engage in political dialogue. A separate "United Daily News" op-ed and an editorial in the China-focused "Want Daily" discussed the new developments in U.S.-China relations, while a "China Times" column said neither Washington nor Beijing secured what they desired in the Obama-Hu meeting. End summary.

A) "The International Community Must Realize That Any Agreement Reached by the KMT and Chinese Communist Party Is by No Means Made at the Wish of the Taiwan People"

The pro-independence "Liberty Times" [circulation: 680,000] editorialized (11/18):

"... In his joint press conference with [Chinese President] Hu Jintao afterwards, [U.S. President Barack] Obama stressed unambiguously: In accordance with the three U.S.-China communiqués and the policy [stipulated in] the Taiwan Relations Act (TRA), we support both sides [of the Taiwan Strait] to strengthen their relations. It is quite evident that the TRA is considered as equally important as the three communiqués; [only in this way] can one accurately interpret the complete picture of the United States' cross-Straits policy, to which it has adhered until today.

"One can say that Obama's cross-Straits policy is fundamentally a continuation of the previous [U.S.] administrations -- namely, it meets the individual interests and common interests of relevant countries to ensure stability, security and peace in the Taiwan Strait and opposes any unilateral attempts to alter the cross-Straits status quo. Yet such an international asset is now facing threats -- namely, China is using military intimidation and political and economic united front [tactics] to carry out its great task of

unification by annexing Taiwan, and the Ma administration in Taiwan is now working in collusion with [Beijing] ..."

B) "'Taiwan Relations Act' Matters Less and Less"

The mass-circulation "Apple Daily" [circulation: 520,000] editorialized (11/18):

"[U.S. President Barack] Obama talked animatedly about adhering to the one China [policy] and the three communiqués in Shanghai while deliberately avoiding mentioning the 'Taiwan Relations Act (TRA).' In his joint statement issued together with [Chinese President] Hu Jintao afterwards, Obama emphasized that the United States must abide by its one China commitment and that he believes the Taiwan [issue] concerns China's sovereignty and territorial integrity, and still he did not mention TRA at all. On another occasion, Obama briefly glossed over the TRA. Nevertheless, officials and scholars in Taiwan and the United States all interpreted [these developments as indicating] that the relations between the United States, China and Taiwan would remain unchanged and the United States would not abandon its commitment to Taiwan. One may not be able to observe the changes in the short or middle term, but in the long run, could it be possible that there are no gradual, accumulated changes? ...

"Generally speaking, given Obama's underprivileged [background] status of being born of a minority ethnic group but growing up in the United States, and his complexion, he ought to sympathize with Taiwan, which is also in an underprivileged position. Also, given the liberal spirit of the Democratic Party, it seems reasonable that Obama will not alienate himself from democratic Taiwan just to curry favor with the authoritarian and undemocratic China. But the truth is that the United States, under the governance of Obama, has been tilting toward China in a more significant way than his

predecessors. Why is this so? Judging from the realism perspective, China is the United States' biggest creditor and Washington needs China's assistance in making it through the dark moments of the [current] economic recession. ...

"Taiwan, as a result, is being gradually cast off in the process while the United States and China are getting closer and closer. Now the United States still asks Taiwan to improve its relations with China, but in the future, it may not even bother to say so and just want to let go and be off the hook. This is the reason why Obama just lightly touched on human rights and the Taiwan issue in Beijing. In other words, for the United States, human rights and Taiwan have gradually faded away and turned from substantive issues to those which exist in form only. Judging from Obama's disposition, he is a president who wants to please everyone, lacking both great vision and in-depth cultural knowledge; he is also an opportunist who veers with circumstances and says things only for his own convenience. Such a man does not have courage and willpower to shoulder [responsibilities] and will change whenever the situation alters. All Taiwan can do is to try its best to take care of itself. ..."

C) "Obama Says 'Hello' in Shanghai-ese"

Columnist Antonio Chiang wrote in his column in the mass-circulation "Apple Daily" [circulation: 520,000] (11/18):

"Obama called himself 'the first Pacific president' and promised that the United States will be back in Asia. But except for making a good impression with China, one can hardly see any of [the United States'] new foreign policy during his trip to Asia this time. One only saw his style but not the real content in his speech. ... [Singapore's Minister Mentor] Lee Kuan Yew openly warned that if the United States stays out of Asia, it will lose its leadership in the world, and once China grows into a superpower in the Asia Pacific region, the balance of power in the region will collapse. Lee's remarks have offended Beijing, but they have spoken the [true feelings] of the Asian Pacific countries. ..."

D) "Go One's Own Way: Both Sides [of the Taiwan Strait] Sign a Memorandum of Understanding on the Same Day When Obama Sets Foot in Beijing"

The pro-unification "United Daily News" [circulation: 400,000]

editorialized (11/18):

"... People may not agree with one another when it comes to how to interpret the [significance] of Obama's visit to China in terms of U.S.-China relations and cross-Strait relations, but they may all agree on the core values. First, the trend of the times is tilting toward China, and Beijing's control over nearly one trillion U.S. dollars worth of U.S. government bonds is just one of [the examples]. Second, the tone in the previous Clinton and Bush administrations was: 'not to contain China, but should welcome it to join the international community.' But Obama's wording is: 'there are very few global challenges that can be solved unless the United States and China agree.' Third, Obama hopes that he can lead the United States out of the 'unilateralism' of the Bush administration, and, given the impact of its predicament in Iraq and the financial tsunami, the United States has started to deeply reflect on its role in the world. With all these great changes adding up, its influence on the U.S.-China relations and on cross-Strait relations is: U.S.-China relations have moved onto a path that is more friendly and cooperative than before, and China's say in things only becomes stronger rather than weaker. By contrast, Taiwan needs to try to find a new path for itself under the new U.S.-China relations. ..."

E) "Urging Both Sides [of the Taiwan Strait] to Engage in Political Dialogue -- Are Washington and Beijing Singing the Same Tune?"

Washington correspondent Vincent Chang wrote in a column in the pro-unification "United Daily News" [circulation: 400,000] (11/18):

"... Judging from the content and breadth of the [U.S.-China joint] statement, Obama has ensured in this trip to Asia that [the United States] will develop a 'partnership' with China and that both countries are willing to work together to handle global issues on the foundation of mutual benefit. This is by far the greatest gain for both sides. ... In addition, the United States also mentioned [in the statement] that it looks forward to 'efforts' by both sides to increase dialogue and interactions in economic, 'political,' [and other fields], and develop 'more positive and stable cross-Strait relations.' ... At the moment when both sides [of the Taiwan Strait] have not yet reached a consensus [on many issues], Washington stepped forward and messed things up with the issue of a political dialogue. The move not only single-handedly endorsed China's position but also violated the part about 'urging both sides to talk,' as specified in the United States' 'Six Assurances.' One cannot help but doubt if there is any quid pro quo between the

United States and China. ..."

F) "Obama, Hu Join Hands Yet Fight [with Each Other]; Taiwan [Needs to] Find a Way out"

Professor Chao Chun-shan from Tamkang University's Graduate Institute of China Studies opined in the pro-unification "United Daily News" [circulation: 400,000] (11/18):

"... In any case, the United States and China are using a strategy of 'seeking common ground while maintaining differences' to maintain their relations of 'both cooperating and conflicting with each other.' In this vein, it will naturally have an impact on the development of the triangular relationship among Taipei, Washington and Beijing and on Taiwan's policy toward the United States and toward China. Obama's open approval of improved cross-Strait relations indicates that the conciliatory policy the Ma administration has pursued since he assumed office in terms of cross-Strait relations has won support of the nations that are friendly with Taiwan and thus created a win-win-win situation. ... On the other hand, the Ma administration's efforts to strengthen [Taiwan's] relations with the United States have added new fuel to the island's 'modus vivendi diplomacy.' ..."

G) "Neither the United States Nor China Gets the Interests Their Desire"

The "International Lookout" column in the KMT-leaning "China Times" [circulation: 120,000] wrote (11/18):

"It appears that in the summit between Obama and Hu Jintao, both sides have failed to reach a consensus on the matters they both

consider most important, and as a result, neither side gets what it wants. ... Even though Obama said in his speech in Tokyo that [the United States] does not seek to contain China, he also said he will not make concessions in terms of values while developing U.S. relations with China. It goes without saying that China will not recognize the American values. As a result, both sides are doomed to be friends rather than allies."

H) "Sino-U.S. Relations as Seen from Obama's Remarks"

The China-focused "Want Daily" [circulation: 10,000] editorialized (11/18):

"... When speaking of the 'Taiwan Relations Act,' normally both China and the United States have their own interpretation -- Beijing simply turns a blind eye to it, while Washington tries to emphasize it whenever it can. But when a U.S. president shows a neither distant nor close attitude toward this act, it would be against the common knowledge of international politics if one says that the United States is not pondering its Taiwan policy under the new circumstances. ..."

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